

Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park: Implementation Update (05/08/2026)

Why is the Sewer District removing Horseshoe Lake Dam and restoring Doan Brook at Horseshoe Park?

The High Hazard Class 1 dam that forms Horseshoe Lake is structurally unsound and not in compliance with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Dam Safety standards. The Cities of Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights are responsible for meeting these requirements, and at the request of the Cities, the Sewer District is assisting through its Regional Stormwater Management Program.

ODNR is requiring the Cities to either remove the dam or bring it into compliance. The Cities of Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights have worked with the Sewer District under the Regional Stormwater Management Program for the last three years to design a plan that removes this safety threat, reestablishes Doan Brook and incorporates many resident-inspired amenities. This work is collectively referred to as the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park project.

Is the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park Project part of the Sewer District's Consent Decree compliance for combined sewer overflow control?

No. The Sewer District operates two separate regional utilities: one for sanitary sewage treatment and the other for stormwater management. This project is separate from the Sewer District's sanitary sewage treatment utility and the Sewer District's Consent Decree combined sewer overflow control work. The restored Doan Brook will not be used by the Sewer District for any sanitary sewage treatment or combined sewer overflow control.

Although the Sewer District's Consent Decree includes requirements for nine large-scale "green infrastructure" projects, the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park project is not a "green infrastructure" project under its Consent Decree. The Sewer District's Consent Decree "green infrastructure" projects are all constructed and complete. These projects are located within the combined sewer area and designed to intercept stormwater before it enters the combined sewer system. Please also see *Our Programs at Work* at the link below for additional discussion about the Sewer District's separate programs and history of work in the Doan Brook watershed.

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What is the Sewer District's role in this project?

The Sewer District's role is to assist the Cities in addressing the ODNR Dam Safety requirements through the design, construction and maintenance of the Doan Brook stream restoration project, which includes the removal of Horseshoe Lake dam. The Sewer District's Regional Stormwater Management Program was created to help address flooding, erosion, and water quality problems on the Regional Stormwater System. The Regional Stormwater System includes streams, pipes, and culverts across our 363 square mile service area that have watershed drainage areas of 300 acres or greater. This includes the Doan Brook and its watershed.

How will the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park project be funded?

Sewer District Regional Stormwater Management Program funds can be used to address the failing dam at Horseshoe Lake if the overall project is consistent with the purposes of the Regional Stormwater Management Program – to control flooding and erosion, and to make improvements to water quality.

A catastrophic breach of the dam would threaten lives, damage property, release significant amounts of sediment downstream, impact stream flow and stormwater conveyance, and negatively impact water quality in Doan Brook. Restoring Doan Brook with Regional Stormwater Management Program funding facilitates proper stormwater conveyance, improves water quality and aquatic and riparian habitat, and addresses the significant public safety concerns created by a structurally unsound dam.

How much will the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park project cost to construct?

The Sewer District will pay an estimated \$24 million for the restoration of Doan Brook including, construction of floodplains, wetlands, the East-West Spine Trail, and the Mid-Park Crossing.

Through the design process, the Cities of Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights independently chose to add additional park amenities, which total an estimated combined \$7.1 million and include an additional trail network and other improvements, like the nature playground, bike racks, benches, the outdoor classroom, and gateways.

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When will we see construction and what will construction look like?

Once we have our permits and easements, the Sewer District will competitively bid the project for six weeks and award the construction contract to a bidder following District procurement practices in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code. We tentatively expect the awarded contractor to mobilize for construction in early 2027.

Then, lasting approximately two years, this area will be transformed by way of a very large construction project. Significant earthwork is necessary to manage more than 180,000 cubic yards of sediment that has accumulated behind the existing Horseshoe Lake dam. Strategic tree removal is also critical to reestablish Doan Brook to its historic stream channel downstream of the existing dam. This work is necessary to ensure a successful stream restoration project.

The Sewer District and its partners have extensive experience in restoring streams and achieving stable projects. The link below has a drone flyover of the Sewer District's similar large-scale stream restoration within Highland Park Golf Course in the Village of Highland Hills, owned by the City of Cleveland.

More about the sediment.

During design of the Doan Brook Restoration at Horseshoe Park project, the Sewer District's environmental consultants sampled the sediment in the lakebed and tested it in a certified laboratory. With these findings, we are confident that it is safe to stabilize and repurpose this sediment on-site.

More about the trees.

The Sewer District's contractor will be removing approximately 1,000 trees from multiple locations within the 60-acre park. Much of this tree removal is necessary to enable the relocation of Doan Brook downstream of the Horseshoe Lake dam to its historic stream channel.

Some trees will be removed to enable the lakebed sediments to be recontoured into the park and to allow for new trails to be constructed that were incorporated into the project during the public outreach sessions. Although some of the approximately 1,000 trees are

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invasive or their health is declined, these trees constitute a minority of the trees being removed. Additionally, while best efforts were made during the detailed design process to avoid the loss of trees – particularly mature trees, as they are critical to stabilizing streambanks, floodplains, and the riparian corridor – approximately 200 trees of 24” at diameter breast height will be removed. The project will include new plantings listed below:

Trees: 1,106 (1”, 2” & 4” caliper)	Herbaceous plugs: 13,888
Shrubs: 6,969 (3 & 5 gal. size)	Live stakes: 7,359
Perennials: 20,184	Bulbs: 10,000

Who will maintain this restored stream and new parkland?

Maintenance responsibilities were carefully considered throughout design, and decisions were made during design to minimize maintenance needs. The Sewer District will maintain the stream, floodplain areas, and wetlands under its Regional Stormwater Management Program. This is approximately 26 acres of the site. The Cities have entered into an agreement to jointly maintain the surrounding parkland and amenities. This is approximately 34 acres of the overall Horseshoe Park. The entire area will continue to be a public park.

What is the status of permitting?

Permitting is part of every stream restoration project, and the Sewer District has extensive experience working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In May 2025, at the guidance of USACE, the Sewer District applied for an USACE Nationwide Permit (NWP) 27 for Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Establishment Activities. At the time, the project met the intent and criteria of the 2021 NWP 27. However, NWP language and requirements are reviewed and updated every 5-years. In March 2026 NWP 27 was reissued but had been modified to no longer authorize dam removal activities. This change applies nationwide and is not specific to this project. So, in late April 2026, USACE notified the Sewer District that because of this change, they would now process our existing application as a Standard Section 404 Permit. This revised permitting approach will require the submittal of additional information to USACE. However, some of the requirements that have already been

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completed by USACE under the NWP application review will be carried over to the Standard permit review and won't need redone, such as Section 106-National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7-Endangered Species Act coordination. With this new permitting approach, the Sewer District will now also seek an Individual Section 401 Water Quality Certification from Ohio EPA. Both the Section 401 and Section 404 Clean Water Act permitting processes require public notice and 30-day comment period.

For more information on the permit process and current status, please see the link below.



Check out our other resources at the QR code including project content, video resources, dam safety information, and more:

<https://www.neorsd.org/DoanBrook>

Questions?

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